

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN



### ***GRYFFINDOR VERSUS RAVENCLAW***

**I**t looked like the end of Ron and Hermione's friendship. Each was so angry with the other that Harry couldn't see how they'd ever make up.

Ron was enraged that Hermione had never taken Crookshanks's attempts to eat Scabbers seriously, hadn't bothered to keep a close enough watch on him, and was still trying to pretend that Crookshanks was innocent by suggesting that Ron look for Scabbers under all the boys' beds. Hermione, meanwhile, maintained fiercely that Ron had no proof that Crookshanks had eaten Scabbers, that the ginger hairs might have been there since Christmas, and that Ron had been prejudiced against her cat ever since Crookshanks had landed on Ron's head in the Magical Menagerie.

Personally, Harry was sure that Crookshanks had eaten Scabbers, and when he tried to point out to Hermione that the evidence all pointed that way, she lost her temper with Harry too.

"Okay, side with Ron, I knew you would!" she said shrilly. "First the Firebolt, now Scabbers, everything's my fault, isn't it! Just leave me alone, Harry, I've got a lot of work to do!"

Ron had taken the loss of his rat very hard indeed.

"Come on, Ron, you were always saying how boring Scabbers was," said

Fred bracingly. “And he’s been off-color for ages, he was wasting away. It was probably better for him to snuff it quickly — one swallow — he probably didn’t feel a thing.”

“*Fred!*” said Ginny indignantly.

“All he did was eat and sleep, Ron, you said it yourself,” said George.

“He bit Goyle for us once!” Ron said miserably. “Remember, Harry?”

“Yeah, that’s true,” said Harry.

“His finest hour,” said Fred, unable to keep a straight face. “Let the scar on Goyle’s finger stand as a lasting tribute to his memory. Oh, come on, Ron, get yourself down to Hogsmeade and buy a new rat, what’s the point of moaning?”

In a last-ditch attempt to cheer Ron up, Harry persuaded him to come along to the Gryffindor team’s final practice before the Ravenclaw match, so that he could have a ride on the Firebolt after they’d finished. This did seem to take Ron’s mind off Scabbers for a moment (“Great! Can I try and shoot a few goals on it?”) so they set off for the Quidditch field together.

Madam Hooch, who was still overseeing Gryffindor practices to keep an eye on Harry, was just as impressed with the Firebolt as everyone else had been. She took it in her hands before takeoff and gave them the benefit of her professional opinion.

“Look at the balance on it! If the Nimbus series has a fault, it’s a slight list to the tail end — you often find they develop a drag after a few years. They’ve updated the handle too, a bit slimmer than the Cleansweeps, reminds me of the old Silver Arrows — a pity they’ve stopped making them. I learned to fly on one, and a very fine old broom it was too. . . .”

She continued in this vein for some time, until Wood said, “Er — Madam Hooch? Is it okay if Harry has the Firebolt back? We need to practice. . . .”

“Oh — right — here you are, then, Potter,” said Madam Hooch. “I’ll sit over here with Weasley. . . .”

She and Ron left the field to sit in the stadium, and the Gryffindor team

gathered around Wood for his final instructions for tomorrow's match.

"Harry, I've just found out who Ravenclaw is playing as Seeker. It's Cho Chang. She's a fourth year, and she's pretty good. . . . I really hoped she wouldn't be fit, she's had some problems with injuries. . . ." Wood scowled his displeasure that Cho Chang had made a full recovery, then said, "On the other hand, she rides a Comet Two Sixty, which is going to look like a joke next to the Firebolt." He gave Harry's broom a look of fervent admiration, then said, "Okay, everyone, let's go —"

And at long last, Harry mounted his Firebolt, and kicked off from the ground.

It was better than he'd ever dreamed. The Firebolt turned with the lightest touch; it seemed to obey his thoughts rather than his grip; it sped across the field at such speed that the stadium turned into a green-and-gray blur; Harry turned it so sharply that Alicia Spinnet screamed, then he went into a perfectly controlled dive, brushing the grassy field with his toes before rising thirty, forty, fifty feet into the air again —

"Harry, I'm letting the Snitch out!" Wood called.

Harry turned and raced a Bludger toward the goalposts; he outstripped it easily, saw the Snitch dart out from behind Wood, and within ten seconds had caught it tightly in his hand.

The team cheered madly. Harry let the Snitch go again, gave it a minute's head start, then tore after it, weaving in and out of the others; he spotted it lurking near Katie Bell's knee, looped her easily, and caught it again.

It was the best practice ever; the team, inspired by the presence of the Firebolt in their midst, performed their best moves faultlessly, and by the time they hit the ground again, Wood didn't have a single criticism to make, which, as George Weasley pointed out, was a first.

"I can't see what's going to stop us tomorrow!" said Wood. "Not unless — Harry, you've sorted out your dementor problem, haven't you?"

"Yeah," said Harry, thinking of his feeble Patronus and wishing it were stronger.

“The dementors won’t turn up again, Oliver. Dumbledore’d go ballistic,” said Fred confidently.

“Well, let’s hope not,” said Wood. “Anyway — good work, everyone. Let’s get back to the tower . . . turn in early —”

“I’m staying out for a bit; Ron wants a go on the Firebolt,” Harry told Wood, and while the rest of the team headed off to the locker rooms, Harry strode over to Ron, who vaulted the barrier to the stands and came to meet him. Madam Hooch had fallen asleep in her seat.

“Here you go,” said Harry, handing Ron the Firebolt.

Ron, an expression of ecstasy on his face, mounted the broom and zoomed off into the gathering darkness while Harry walked around the edge of the field, watching him. Night had fallen before Madam Hooch awoke with a start, told Harry and Ron off for not waking her, and insisted that they go back to the castle.

Harry shouldered the Firebolt and he and Ron walked out of the shadowy stadium, discussing the Firebolt’s superbly smooth action, its phenomenal acceleration, and its pinpoint turning. They were halfway toward the castle when Harry, glancing to his left, saw something that made his heart turn over — a pair of eyes, gleaming out of the darkness.

Harry stopped dead, his heart banging against his ribs.

“What’s the matter?” said Ron.

Harry pointed. Ron pulled out his wand and muttered, “*Lumos!*”

A beam of light fell across the grass, hit the bottom of a tree, and illuminated its branches; there, crouching among the budding leaves, was Crookshanks.

“Get out of here!” Ron roared, and he stooped down and seized a stone lying on the grass, but before he could do anything else, Crookshanks had vanished with one swish of his long ginger tail.

“See?” Ron said furiously, chucking the stone down again. “She’s still letting him wander about wherever he wants — probably washing down

Scabbers with a couple of birds now. . . .”

Harry didn’t say anything. He took a deep breath as relief seeped through him; he had been sure for a moment that those eyes had belonged to the Grim. They set off for the castle once more. Slightly ashamed of his moment of panic, Harry didn’t say anything to Ron — nor did he look left or right until they had reached the well-lit entrance hall.

Harry went down to breakfast the next morning with the rest of the boys in his dormitory, all of whom seemed to think the Firebolt deserved a sort of guard of honor. As Harry entered the Great Hall, heads turned in the direction of the Firebolt, and there was a good deal of excited muttering. Harry saw, with enormous satisfaction, that the Slytherin team were all looking thunderstruck.

“Did you see his face?” said Ron gleefully, looking back at Malfoy. “He can’t believe it! This is brilliant!”

Wood, too, was basking in the reflected glory of the Firebolt.

“Put it here, Harry,” he said, laying the broom in the middle of the table and carefully turning it so that its name faced upward. People from the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables were soon coming over to look. Cedric Diggory came over to congratulate Harry on having acquired such a superb replacement for his Nimbus, and Percy’s Ravenclaw girlfriend, Penelope Clearwater, asked if she could actually hold the Firebolt.

“Now, now, Penny, no sabotage!” said Percy heartily as she examined the Firebolt closely. “Penelope and I have got a bet on,” he told the team. “Ten Galleons on the outcome of the match!”

Penelope put the Firebolt down again, thanked Harry, and went back to her table.

“Harry — make sure you win,” said Percy, in an urgent whisper. “*I haven’t got ten Galleons*. Yes, I’m coming, Penny!” And he bustled off to join her in a piece of toast.

“Sure you can manage that broom, Potter?” said a cold, drawling voice.

Draco Malfoy had arrived for a closer look, Crabbe and Goyle right behind him.

“Yeah, reckon so,” said Harry casually.

“Got plenty of special features, hasn’t it?” said Malfoy, eyes glittering maliciously. “Shame it doesn’t come with a parachute — in case you get too near a dementor.”

Crabbe and Goyle sniggered.

“Pity you can’t attach an extra arm to yours, Malfoy,” said Harry. “Then it could catch the Snitch for you.”

The Gryffindor team laughed loudly. Malfoy’s pale eyes narrowed, and he stalked away. They watched him rejoin the rest of the Slytherin team, who put their heads together, no doubt asking Malfoy whether Harry’s broom really was a Firebolt.

At a quarter to eleven, the Gryffindor team set off for the locker rooms. The weather couldn’t have been more different from their match against Hufflepuff. It was a clear, cool day with a very light breeze; there would be no visibility problems this time, and Harry, though nervous, was starting to feel the excitement only a Quidditch match could bring. They could hear the rest of the school moving into the stadium beyond. Harry took off his black school robes, removed his wand from his pocket, and stuck it inside the T-shirt he was going to wear under his Quidditch robes. He only hoped he wouldn’t need it. He wondered suddenly whether Professor Lupin was in the crowd, watching.

“You know what we’ve got to do,” said Wood as they prepared to leave the locker rooms. “If we lose this match, we’re out of the running. Just — just fly like you did in practice yesterday, and we’ll be okay!”

They walked out onto the field to tumultuous applause. The Ravenclaw team, dressed in blue, were already standing in the middle of the field. Their Seeker, Cho Chang, was the only girl on their team. She was shorter than Harry by about a head, and Harry couldn’t help noticing, nervous as he was, that she was extremely pretty. She smiled at Harry as the teams faced each other behind their captains, and he felt a slight lurch in the region of his stomach that he didn’t think had anything to do with nerves.

“Wood, Davies, shake hands,” Madam Hooch said briskly, and Wood shook hands with the Ravenclaw Captain.

“Mount your brooms . . . on my whistle . . . three — two — one —”

Harry kicked off into the air and the Firebolt zoomed higher and faster than any other broom; he soared around the stadium and began squinting around for the Snitch, listening all the while to the commentary, which was being provided by the Weasley twins’ friend Lee Jordan.

“They’re off, and the big excitement this match is the Firebolt that Harry Potter is flying for Gryffindor. According to *Which Broomstick*, the Firebolt’s going to be the broom of choice for the national teams at this year’s World Championship —”

“Jordan, would you mind telling us what’s going on in the match?” interrupted Professor McGonagall’s voice.

“Right you are, Professor — just giving a bit of background information — the Firebolt, incidentally, has a built-in auto-brake and —”

“Jordan!”

“Okay, okay, Gryffindor in possession, Katie Bell of Gryffindor heading for goal . . .”

Harry streaked past Katie in the opposite direction, gazing around for a glint of gold and noticing that Cho Chang was tailing him closely. She was undoubtedly a very good flier — she kept cutting across him, forcing him to change direction.

“Show her your acceleration, Harry!” Fred yelled as he whooshed past in pursuit of a Bludger that was aiming for Alicia.

Harry urged the Firebolt forward as they rounded the Ravenclaw goalposts and Cho fell behind. Just as Katie succeeded in scoring the first goal of the match, and the Gryffindor end of the field went wild, he saw it — the Snitch was close to the ground, flitting near one of the barriers.

Harry dived; Cho saw what he was doing and tore after him — Harry was speeding up, excitement flooding him; dives were his speciality, he was ten

feet away —

Then a Bludger, hit by one of the Ravenclaw Beaters, came pelting out of nowhere; Harry veered off course, avoiding it by an inch, and in those few, crucial seconds, the Snitch had vanished.

There was a great “Ooooooh” of disappointment from the Gryffindor supporters, but much applause for their Beater from the Ravenclaw end. George Weasley vented his feelings by hitting the second Bludger directly at the offending Beater, who was forced to roll right over in midair to avoid it.

“Gryffindor leads by eighty points to zero, and look at that Firebolt go! Potter’s really putting it through its paces now, see it turn — Chang’s Comet is just no match for it, the Firebolt’s precision-balance is really noticeable in these long —”

“JORDAN! ARE YOU BEING PAID TO ADVERTISE FIREBOLTS? GET ON WITH THE COMMENTARY!”

Ravenclaw was pulling back; they had now scored three goals, which put Gryffindor only fifty points ahead — if Cho got the Snitch before him, Ravenclaw would win. Harry dropped lower, narrowly avoiding a Ravenclaw Chaser, scanning the field frantically — a glint of gold, a flutter of tiny wings — the Snitch was circling the Gryffindor goalpost —

Harry accelerated, eyes fixed on the speck of gold ahead — but just then, Cho appeared out of thin air, blocking him —

“HARRY, THIS IS NO TIME TO BE A GENTLEMAN!” Wood roared as Harry swerved to avoid a collision. “KNOCK HER OFF HER BROOM IF YOU HAVE TO!”

Harry turned and caught sight of Cho; she was grinning. The Snitch had vanished again. Harry turned his Firebolt upward and was soon twenty feet above the game. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Cho following him. . . . She’d decided to mark him rather than search for the Snitch herself. . . . All right, then . . . if she wanted to tail him, she’d have to take the consequences. . . .

He dived again, and Cho, thinking he’d seen the Snitch, tried to follow;



Harry pulled out of the dive very sharply; she hurtled downward; he rose fast as a bullet once more, and then saw it, for the third time — the Snitch was glittering way above the field at the Ravenclaw end.

He accelerated; so, many feet below, did Cho. He was winning, gaining on the Snitch with every second — then —

“Oh!” screamed Cho, pointing.

Distracted, Harry looked down.

Three dementors, three tall, black, hooded dementors, were looking up at him.

He didn’t stop to think. Plunging a hand down the neck of his robes, he whipped out his wand and roared, “*Expecto Patronum!*”

Something silver-white, something enormous, erupted from the end of his wand. He knew it had shot directly at the dementors but didn’t pause to watch; his mind still miraculously clear, he looked ahead — he was nearly there. He stretched out the hand still grasping his wand and just managed to close his fingers over the small, struggling Snitch.

Madam Hooch’s whistle sounded. Harry turned around in midair and saw six scarlet blurs bearing down on him; next moment, the whole team was hugging him so hard he was nearly pulled off his broom. Down below he could hear the roars of the Gryffindors in the crowd.

“That’s my boy!” Wood kept yelling. Alicia, Angelina, and Katie had all kissed Harry; Fred had him in a grip so tight Harry felt as though his head would come off. In complete disarray, the team managed to make its way back to the ground. Harry got off his broom and looked up to see a gaggle of Gryffindor supporters sprinting onto the field, Ron in the lead. Before he knew it, he had been engulfed by the cheering crowd.

“Yes!” Ron yelled, yanking Harry’s arm into the air. “Yes! Yes!”

“Well *done*, Harry!” said Percy, looking delighted. “Ten Galleons to me! Must find Penelope, excuse me —”

“Good for you, Harry!” roared Seamus Finnigan.

“Ruddy brilliant!” boomed Hagrid over the heads of the milling Gryffindors.

“That was quite some Patronus,” said a voice in Harry’s ear.

Harry turned around to see Professor Lupin, who looked both shaken and pleased.

“The dementors didn’t affect me at all!” Harry said excitedly. “I didn’t feel a thing!”

“That would be because they — er — weren’t dementors,” said Professor Lupin. “Come and see —”

He led Harry out of the crowd until they were able to see the edge of the field.

“You gave Mr. Malfoy quite a fright,” said Lupin.

Harry stared. Lying in a crumpled heap on the ground were Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, and Marcus Flint, the Slytherin team Captain, all struggling to remove themselves from long, black, hooded robes. It looked as though Malfoy had been standing on Goyle’s shoulders. Standing over them, with an expression of the utmost fury on her face, was Professor McGonagall.

“An unworthy trick!” she was shouting. “A low and cowardly attempt to sabotage the Gryffindor Seeker! Detention for all of you, and fifty points from Slytherin! I shall be speaking to Professor Dumbledore about this, make no mistake! Ah, here he comes now!”

If anything could have set the seal on Gryffindor’s victory, it was this. Ron, who had fought his way through to Harry’s side, doubled up with laughter as they watched Malfoy fighting to extricate himself from the robe, Goyle’s head still stuck inside it.

“Come on, Harry!” said George, fighting his way over. “Party! Gryffindor common room, now!”

“Right,” said Harry, and feeling happier than he had in ages, he and the rest of the team led the way, still in their scarlet robes, out of the stadium and back up to the castle.

It felt as though they had already won the Quidditch Cup; the party went on all day and well into the night. Fred and George Weasley disappeared for a couple of hours and returned with armfuls of bottles of butterbeer, pumpkin fizz, and several bags full of Honeydukes sweets.

“How did you do that?” squealed Angelina Johnson as George started throwing Peppermint Toads into the crowd.

“With a little help from Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs,” Fred muttered in Harry’s ear.

Only one person wasn’t joining in the festivities. Hermione, incredibly, was sitting in a corner, attempting to read an enormous book entitled *Home Life and Social Habits of British Muggles*. Harry broke away from the table where Fred and George had started juggling butterbeer bottles and went over to her.

“Did you even come to the match?” he asked her.

“Of course I did,” said Hermione in a strangely high-pitched voice, not looking up. “And I’m very glad we won, and I think you did really well, but I need to read this by Monday.”

“Come on, Hermione, come and have some food,” Harry said, looking over at Ron and wondering whether he was in a good enough mood to bury the hatchet.

“I can’t, Harry. I’ve still got four hundred and twenty-two pages to read!” said Hermione, now sounding slightly hysterical. “Anyway . . .” She glanced over at Ron too. “*He* doesn’t want me to join in.”

There was no arguing with this, as Ron chose that moment to say loudly, “If Scabbers hadn’t just been *eaten*, he could have had some of those Fudge Flies. He used to really like them —”

Hermione burst into tears. Before Harry could say or do anything, she tucked the enormous book under her arm, and, still sobbing, ran toward the staircase to the girls’ dormitories and out of sight.

“Can’t you give her a break?” Harry asked Ron quietly.

“No,” said Ron flatly. “If she just acted like she was sorry — but she’ll

never admit she's wrong, Hermione. She's still acting like Scabbers has gone on vacation or something."

The Gryffindor party ended only when Professor McGonagall turned up in her tartan dressing gown and hair net at one in the morning, to insist that they all go to bed. Harry and Ron climbed the stairs to their dormitory, still discussing the match. At last, exhausted, Harry climbed into bed, twitched the hangings of his four-poster shut to block out a ray of moonlight, lay back, and felt himself almost instantly drifting off to sleep. . . .

He had a very strange dream. He was walking through a forest, his Firebolt over his shoulder, following something silvery-white. It was winding its way through the trees ahead, and he could only catch glimpses of it between the leaves. Anxious to catch up with it, he sped up, but as he moved faster, so did his quarry. Harry broke into a run, and ahead he heard hooves gathering speed. Now he was running flat out, and ahead he could hear galloping. Then he turned a corner into a clearing and —

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGHHHHH!  
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Harry woke as suddenly as though he'd been hit in the face. Disoriented in the total darkness, he fumbled with his hangings — he could hear movements around him, and Seamus Finnigan's voice from the other side of the room: "What's going on?"

Harry thought he heard the dormitory door slam. At last finding the divide in his curtains, he ripped them back, and at the same moment, Dean Thomas lit his lamp.

Ron was sitting up in bed, the hangings torn from one side, a look of utmost terror on his face.

"Black! Sirius Black! With a knife!"

"*What?*"

"Here! Just now! Slashed the curtains! Woke me up!"

"You sure you weren't dreaming, Ron?" said Dean.

“Look at the curtains! I tell you, he was here!”

They all scrambled out of bed; Harry reached the dormitory door first, and they sprinted back down the staircase. Doors opened behind them, and sleepy voices called after them.

“Who shouted?”

“What’re you doing?”

The common room was lit with the glow of the dying fire, still littered with the debris from the party. It was deserted.

“Are you *sure* you weren’t dreaming, Ron?”

“I’m telling you, I saw him!”

“What’s all the noise?”

“Professor McGonagall told us to go to bed!”

A few of the girls had come down their staircase, pulling on dressing gowns and yawning. Boys, too, were reappearing.

“Excellent, are we carrying on?” said Fred Weasley brightly.

“Everyone back upstairs!” said Percy, hurrying into the common room and pinning his Head Boy badge to his pajamas as he spoke.

“Perce — Sirius Black!” said Ron faintly. “In our dormitory! With a knife! Woke me up!”

The common room went very still.

“Nonsense!” said Percy, looking startled. “You had too much to eat, Ron — had a nightmare —”

“I’m telling you —”

“Now, really, enough’s enough!”

Professor McGonagall was back. She slammed the portrait behind her as she entered the common room and stared furiously around.

“I am delighted that Gryffindor won the match, but this is getting ridiculous! Percy, I expected better of you!”

“I certainly didn’t authorize this, Professor!” said Percy, puffing himself up indignantly. “I was just telling them all to get back to bed! My brother Ron here had a nightmare —”

“IT WASN’T A NIGHTMARE!” Ron yelled. “PROFESSOR, I WOKE UP, AND SIRIUS BLACK WAS STANDING OVER ME, HOLDING A KNIFE!”

Professor McGonagall stared at him.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Weasley, how could he possibly have gotten through the portrait hole?”

“Ask him!” said Ron, pointing a shaking finger at the back of Sir Cadogan’s picture. “Ask him if he saw —”

Glaring suspiciously at Ron, Professor McGonagall pushed the portrait back open and went outside. The whole common room listened with bated breath.

“Sir Cadogan, did you just let a man enter Gryffindor Tower?”

“Certainly, good lady!” cried Sir Cadogan.

There was a stunned silence, both inside and outside the common room.

“You — you *did*?” said Professor McGonagall. “But — but the password!”

“He had ’em!” said Sir Cadogan proudly. “Had the whole week’s, my lady! Read ’em off a little piece of paper!”

Professor McGonagall pulled herself back through the portrait hole to face the stunned crowd. She was white as chalk.

“Which person,” she said, her voice shaking, “which abysmally foolish person wrote down this week’s passwords and left them lying around?”

There was utter silence, broken by the smallest of terrified squeaks. Neville Longbottom, trembling from head to fluffy-slippered toes, raised his hand slowly into the air.